REMARKS

Claims 1 and 19-26 are now pending in this application for which applicants seek reconsideration.

Claim 1 stands were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shishido (USP 6,376,854). Shishido generally discloses the concept of providing some form of correction to data prior to detecting pattern defects. Shishido, however, is directed to scanning substrates and detecting pattern mismatches and not to detecting abnormalities caused by foreign matter as in the claimed invention. Accordingly, applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

In the claimed invention, the imaging device selectively images either a white reference device or an original document placed on a document support. A random noise suppressing device suppresses random noise components in the white reference image data generated by the image reading device. A detecting device then detects a location of one or more abnormalities in the white reference image data in which random noise components have been suppressed by the random noise suppressing device, wherein each abnormality corresponds with the presence of foreign matter on the reference surface of the white reference member. An abnormality identification device then generates an abnormality signal indicative of the detected location of the abnormality.

In contrast, there is no need to image a reference member in Shishido prior to imaging an original, as a pre-loaded standard image of a substrate pattern is provided in memory. This is because Shishido is directed to finding incorrect pattern matches between the standard image and a scanned substrate, as opposed to finding abnormalities causes by foreign matter of a white reference surface. For example, in Shishido, when a normal part is imaged and differences caused by minor misalignment or illumination differences occur, the normal image does not match up to the reference image stored in memory. Shishido attempts to correct this mismatch so that normal parts are not improperly identified as bad parts. Accordingly, the reference is not really identifying abnormalities related to foreign matter found on a reference surface as set forth in claim 1.

In view of the above, applicant submits that the single Shishido reference cannot form the basis for finding claim 1 prima facie obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as the reference fails to disclose or suggest the specific features set forth in the claim. Claims 19-24 depend either directly or indirectly on claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons set forth with respect to claim 1.

Claim 26 has been added to further claim the features of the disclosed invention. Applicant submits none of the references of record taken singly or in combination disclose or suggest the features of claim 26.

In view of the above, all of the claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance, notice of which is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,

ROSSI, KIMMS & McDOWELL LLP

 24 NOVEMBER 2008   /Marc A. Rossi/
DATE   MARC A. ROSSI
                                           REG. NO. 31,923

                                           P.O. BOX 826
                                           ASHBURN, VA 20146-0826
                                           703-726-6020 (PHONE)
                                           703-726-6024 (FAX)